



Rev. Doreen Forde-FTCC Bible Study April 16, 2026

## Review 11:25-26.

- Because of the growth of the church at this time, Barnabas realized they needed reinforcements. He knew Saul was the man for the job. Remember, Acts spans several decades. Even though we recently read about Saul in Acts 9, today's events took place approximately eight to ten years later.
- ❖ What do you think Saul might have been doing during that time?
- What we have come to know about Saul later in his letters is that he was a disciple-making machine. Perhaps Barnabas, seeing the rapid addition of new believers, knew it was important that these men and women be trained in the Scriptures.
- After he found Saul and brought him to Antioch, the two men stayed there for an entire year, teaching the ever-growing population of believers. They became so notorious, the people of the region came up with a name for this group.
- ❖ What were the disciples called? Look up the meaning of this word in a Bible dictionary.  
<https://biblehub.com/greek/5546.htm>

## 11:25-26

- Some scholars believe *Christian* meant “little Christ.” While the term was perhaps intended to be derogatory, it clearly stuck and was later embraced. While the church’s antagonists wanted believers to hang their heads in shame, what better honor could be granted to a forgiven sinner than to be dubbed “Little Christ” or “follower of Christ?” Even as they suffered greater persecution, Christians would begin to “glorify God in that name” (1 Peter 4:16).
- ❖ Review **11:27-30**.
- ❖ What was the disciples’ response to the prophecy of a famine to come?
- ❖ Why is the disciples’ response to the prophecy of a famine in **11:27-30** important?
- ❖ Compare the disciples’ response in **11:27–30** to earlier examples of practical care and solidarity in the book of Acts.

## **Acts 12:1-5**

### **Peter's Miraculous Escape From Prison**

12 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. <sup>2</sup> He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. <sup>3</sup> When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

## Review 12:1-5.

- When you see the name Herod in the New Testament, it can be a bit confusing because there are, in fact, several Herods in the history books. While it might be easier to ignore the question of who is who, we would miss an important note about the government and society at that time.
- Herod the Great is the one from the Christmas story, the one who tried to have Jesus killed (**Matthew 2**). Herod Antipas had John the Baptist executed and was on the throne during Jesus' trial.
- Herod Agrippa I is the Herod in today's story. Why does that matter? Because his pride and political goals actually ended up making the work of the Holy Spirit spread even more—even though that was the opposite of what he wanted.
- ❖ List the acts of cruelty the church endured at the hands of Herod in just these opening verses.
- James, the brother of John, was the first apostle martyred and the second follower of Jesus martyred, James's death was tragic; it reveals the political temperature of the day toward the church. But there's more to this story than meets the eye.

## **Review 12:1-5.**

- ❖ Why did Herod have Peter put in jail?
- ❖ How did the church respond?
- The situation appeared hopeless. There was likely no one on the inside who could advocate for Peter's deliverance. So, the church appealed to a higher court. Notice that their situation did not incite panic. It incited prayer.

## Acts 12:6-11

<sup>6</sup> The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. <sup>7</sup> Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

<sup>8</sup> Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. <sup>9</sup> Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

<sup>11</sup> Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

## Review 12:6-11.

- ❖ Describe the level of security in Peter's prison.
- It was humanly impossible for Peter to escape. Enter: an angel of the Lord.
- ❖ What was Peter doing when the angel entered the scene?
- The angel had to strike him to wake him up. What peace Peter must have had to be asleep in sure dire, uncomfortable circumstances. The angel removed the chains, and Peter slipped away from the guards, past the sentries at the doors, and out the iron gates of the city. All of this took place on the very night Peter was to be brought before Herod.
- ❖ What does Peter's calmness and the miraculous way God rescues Simon Peter teach us about trusting God when we are in situations that seem impossible?

## Acts 12:12-19

<sup>12</sup> When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. <sup>13</sup> Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. <sup>14</sup> When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

<sup>15</sup> "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

<sup>16</sup> But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. <sup>17</sup> Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

<sup>18</sup> In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. <sup>19</sup> After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

## **Review 12:12-19.**

- Peter is miraculously freed from prison and goes to the house where believers are praying.
- Rhoda, a servant girl, answers the door and recognizes Peter's voice.
- The other believers don't believe her at first, thinking she is mistaken or imagining things.
- Peter keeps knocking, and eventually, they realize God has truly delivered him.

## Review 12:12-19.

- ❖ Why do you think Rhoda didn't immediately let Peter in when she recognized him?
- ❖ When they finally came to the door to see Peter standing before them, what did he instruct them to do?
  - You might be thinking, *Does Peter not know that James is dead?* But this was a different James. The James who was beheaded was the brother of John. Peter was referring to James the brother of Jesus, the now presumed leader of the church in Jerusalem. This news would have been an immense encouragement to the persecuted church.
  - Upon hearing about Peter's escape, Herod had two choices before him.
- ❖ Knowing his ego and his desire to please the Jews, which of the following was Herod more likely to do?
  - A. Acknowledge that an act of the one true God had taken place.
  - B. Accuse the soldiers of conspiracy and have them killed.
- Herod's pride continued to lead him toward his own demise.

## **Acts 12:20-25**

<sup>20</sup> He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

<sup>21</sup> On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. <sup>22</sup> They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." <sup>23</sup> Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

<sup>24</sup> But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

### **Barnabas and Saul Sent Off**

<sup>25</sup> When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

## Review 12:20-25.

- ❖ Why did an angel of the Lord strike Herod down?
- Notice the order of events in Herod's death. Did you catch it? The text doesn't say that Herod died and was eaten by worms. He was eaten by worms *and then* he died. God will not be mocked.
- In Acts 12, we face a difficult reality. In this chapter, one apostle is executed; another is rescued.
- ❖ Were the prayers for James less fervent? Did the church not muster enough faith for his rescue? Did God like Peter more than James?
- ❖ Has there been a time in your life when you faced similar questions?
- ❖ How can we faithfully pray for others even when we don't see God answer in the way we hope, and what does this teach us about trusting His sovereignty?

## Praying for God's Will – Lessons from Acts 12

- It's hard when our hopes differ from God's plan – James' death vs. Peter's rescue.
- Faith is tested in uncertainty – We don't always see the outcome.
- Trust God, not control – Prayer is about surrender, not forcing results.
- **Takeaway:**  
Faithful prayer = trusting God's plan, even when it's hard to understand.

## Review 12:24-25.

- **12:24** tells us that *the word of God continued to spread and flourish*. God showed that He was still moving. Evil has not won. God's story would continue.
- Bringing John Mark, the author of the gospel of Mark, along with them, Saul and Barnabas continued their work of spreading the gospel.
- No matter what these early Christians encountered, they could not stop speaking of what God was doing. They had found that even in suffering, God is where the joy is!
- As **Acts 12** ends, the focus now begins to shift. God starts using key leaders—Saul (later called Paul), Barnabas, and John Mark—to take the gospel beyond Jerusalem.
- Even in persecution and difficulty, God's people continue to share His message, and His mission moves forward.
- ❖ Where do you see yourself in **Acts 12**: Earnest in prayer, struggling to trust, or surprised by God's power? What's your next step because of that?